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Teaching English to Young Learners in pandemic era at SD Muslim Cendekia

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ABSTRACT

The Covid-19 pandemic adds a new challenge for teachers to innovate new teaching strategies during the post-pandemic. Identifying English as a foreign language (EFL) students' learning strategies, teachers' preparation, and challenges are needed to innovate a new alternative approach for a post pandemic learning activity, thus investigating them is worth studying. The study is based on the premise that the golden age of young learners influences the success of language learning. This study was conducted during the government's implementation of English as a local supplementation subject. A case study was used as the approach of the study, with an interactive model to analyze the data. Observation, field notes, interviews, and documents are used as the instruments to collect the data. The result of this study shows that oral communication is the main component of the learning activity. A lesson plan is developed with the purpose of helping teachers establish the appropriate medium. The main issues encountered by teachers are how to capture students' attention and focus during the learning activity. In addition, suggestions for further study are presented.

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1. Introduction

In 1989, the ministry of education and culture conducted a national survey in view of the importance of English in learning and concluded that after learning English for six years, the high school graduates' skills were still less than satisfactory. Decree No. 060/U/1993 was issued in 1992 as a recommendation for English in elementary school (Zein, 2017). However, English was not a compulsory subject, so the government then decided that elementary schools should implement English depending on the needs of the school. The policy from the Ministry of Education and Culture interested English as a supplementary local subject, which means elementary schools have authority to include English lessons as a subject to teach (Khulel, 2021). Learning English as a foreign language would be beneficial for students as they belong to the golden age. Numerous schools offer English as an additional subject for students to receive the golden age benefit.

Sukarno (2012) argued that elementary school students can learn anything easily because at that age, students have a period called the “golden age” in language learning, which makes it a correct decision if English teaching and learning are given as children are quick to learn new things. Young learners are active learners, and they learn through social interaction. Among the characteristics of young learners are that they have limited reading and writing skills, even in their first language. They learn everything around them, enjoying fantasy, imagination, and movement (Nunan, 2011). Other characteristics of young learners, according to Harmer (2007) are that they understand mostly when they see, hear, touch, and interact rather than from explanation and response.

On the other hand, the success of teaching English is also affected by many factors, not only by age. Some of the factors that must be considered are the curriculum, the media, the methods used, and the teacher’s competence (Pransiska, 2016). Therefore, teachers need to be able to adapt, manage the class, give variety in learning, create good relationships with students, and have knowledge of the development of current education. As stated by Wulandari et al. (2020), when teachers have the fundamental understanding of young learners, the learning activity will be more effective. Teachers have an important role in the success of learning activities, so teachers determine the learning outcome of students. When teachers have a better understanding of young learners, it makes it easier for them to teach more effectively.

The Covid-19 pandemic is a situation in which a student’s study routine was abruptly switched from school to home (Iqbal et al, 2021). As a result, the process of learning activities was implemented as remote learning. Activities must be implemented from home to minimize the spread of Covid-19. Online learning also presents a challenge to any school, particularly teachers, as a facilitator in a learning activity (Gillett-Swan, 2017; Yani et al., 2021). Teachers encounter problems during online learning. It is known that there were problems experienced by elementary school students in the implementation of online learning during the pandemic, such as the lack of comfort at the time of the online learning; the low level of student digital literacy; the lack of adaptability of students; the lack of availability of devices; inadequate internet connection; the lack of availability of supporting costs for online learning; the low level of understanding of student materials; and the low motivation of students’ learning (Widikasih et al., 2021). Despite the challenges they face, teachers must remain professional and responsible.

In this situation, researchers conducted a study at SD Muslim Cendekia in Batu. Based on preliminary observations and an informal interview with an English teacher, SD Muslim Cendekia, has implemented the following unique English teaching and learning process when the Covid-19 pandemic occurred: (1) English learning is equipped with books with colorful themes and audio so that students can learn both simple vocabulary and conversations individually at home; (2) the learning activity was simple conversations so that students could practice rather than memorize vocabulary; (3) Teachers also share learning videos made by teachers with highly attractive animation for students to pay attention to material explanations through the WhatsApp group; (4) A worksheet and workbook to study at home. In that worksheet, there are numerous activities that can be used as supplementary materials for learning; and (5) parents can pick up and collect both worksheets and workbooks that students have done at home. Besides that, parents may also accompany children to borrow various books from the school library. All of the unique learning processes at SD Muslim

Cendekia in the pandemic era make students have a pleasing learning motivation even though learning is performed in each student's home.

However, when the Covid-19 cases began to decrease, the government implemented a new post-pandemic policy. Innovation is the keyword in the new normal education. Some schools have begun to reform the learning activities to align with the government's new policy. In this situation, students who initially only carried out learning activities at home were allowed to study at school according to the terms and conditions published by the government. Likewise, the SD Muslim Cendekia applied new normal learning in the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. This includes the implementation of new normal teaching and learning activities, which are divided into morning session and afternoon session schedules with shorter time frames (30 minutes). This has been done as a transition from online learning to offline learning.

Students at SD Muslim Cendekia are encouraged to speak English on a daily basis. The pandemic has hampered and interrupted the English language program at the SD Muslim Cendekia, specifically Fun with Language, according to the school's founder and principal. Different teaching and learning situations occur before and during the pandemic. Before the pandemic, students could use some expression of asking permission to go to the restroom or to the canteen by using English. Unfortunately, they used fewer English expressions during the pandemic. This means students have fewer opportunities to use the English language. Therefore, the teacher's role to substitute this opportunity for learning is highly needed.

Various studies on the teaching of English to young learners (EYL) have been conducted. However, there was still a possibility to investigate English language programs in elementary schools during a COVID-19 outbreak. That is why SD Muslim Cendekia is worth researching. Nurasiah (2017) found out that the curriculum used in learning English at Nurul Quran Islamic School Aceh Besar is KTSP and a character-based curriculum. She claims that studying some of the vocabulary and simple structures in daily life must be introduced progressively to young students. In addition, a previous study by Aufa (2018) argued that the curriculum used at SD IT Cahaya Bangsa Mijen-Semarang was Basic English by Yudhistira Publisher. He reported that the purpose of English learning is to improve the ability to communicate orally at school and to realize the importance of English for young students. The development of an English-learning system that introduces simple structures and the practice of speaking English was also done in English teaching and learning at SD Muslim Cendekia. Regarding this situation, this current study focuses on investigating how the learning was there. This study aims to identify and describe (1) how students learn English during the pandemic era; (2) what kind of preparation teachers have to teach English; and (3) the challenges teachers face when teaching English during the pandemic era at SD Muslim Cendekia Kota Batu.

2. Method

This study used a descriptive qualitative method. It did so by analyzing words rather than numbers and by reporting the detailed views of the people who had been studied. According to Miles et al. (2014), qualitative research is a daily life study with individual participants, groups, communities, and organizations intensively and/or prolonged in a natural setting. In this study, the researcher

used case study research to explain Teaching English to Young Learners. The researcher chooses the case study method to thoroughly investigate and analyze the existing natural setting of Teaching English to Young Learners (TEYL) in the Pandemic Era at SD Muslim Cendekia Kota Batu.

According to the research design, the subjects of this study are not treated by the researcher. The researcher is interested in investigating and analyzing the social setting in which young learners in SD Muslim Cendekia acquire English. In SD Muslim Cendekia, there are only first to fourth grades. That is because the elementary school was only established in 2017. In one batch, there are 75 students divided into three classes, thus, in one class there are 25 students. The three classes are grouped according to students' low, medium, and high abilities. Currently, the research at SD Muslim cendekia has 291 students, 1 headmaster, 30 teachers, and 8 staff.

There are six participants in this study. The first participant is the headmaster, who provides additional information on the goals for pupils learning English. The second is the English lesson coordinator, who does coordination, monitoring, and briefing on English learning at SD Muslim Cendekia, and the four English teachers who inform students' learning process. The focus of this research was on the teaching preparation of the teachers to teach English, how the students learned English, and the challenges found by the teachers to teach English in the pandemic era at SD Muslim Cendekia Kota Batu.

In this study, four instruments were used, such as an observation sheet, field notes, an interview guide, and documents. In qualitative research, data is collected by observing people when they are interacting in their natural settings so that their behaviors and words can be put into their proper context (Angrosino., 2007). Furthermore, the objective of the observation is to perceive and discover the accurate depiction of data in the field. In addition to observations, field notes are also used to complete data collection in the field by giving more extensive data when researchers find a new possible outcome. After that, six participants are interviewed to confirm the data that was found and collected with the hope of assembling the authentic information. Lastly, relevant documents were collected and archived to provide further evidence for the study.

The question of the observation sheet and interview guide was adopted from Aufa (2018). The researcher observed two classes in the low class and the high class. During the observation phase, the researcher sits at the back to observe the learning process, classroom management, teacher's role, student's role, and the problem of teaching English to young learners. The researcher decided to observe directly with a checklist and field notes. The researcher observed two classes in the low class and the high class. During the observation phase, the researcher sits at the back to observe the learning process, classroom management, teacher's role, student's role, and the problem of teaching English to young learners. The researcher decided to observe directly with a checklist and field notes.

After the observation process, the researcher conducted an interview with six participants to collect information by asking several questions. The researcher used the interview as the instrument for collecting the data by interviewing the English teacher in order to know the teachers' perception towards teaching and learning English at SD Muslim Cendekia Kota Batu. A researcher is an interviewer who gives questions, asks for explanations, takes notes, records, and marks the answers. On the other hand, the interviewees like to answer questions, explain, and maybe give questions back to the interviewer. The documents in this study were the teaching materials and teaching media, includ-

ing syllabi, lesson plans, lesson schedules, workbooks, worksheets, textbooks, assessments of learning, and photos.

Bogdan and Biklen (2003), mentioned that in qualitative research, since the data analysis does not use statistics that require numerical data, the data is collected and recorded in the description rather than symbols or numbers. Data analysis is more focused on the process in the field along with data collection. Once all the research data is collected, it will be analyzed by the researcher. To analyze the data, the researchers applied the framework that has been expressed by Miles et al. (2014) which there were three stages in analyzing the data: (1) data condensation, (2) data display, and (3) conclusions, drawing/verification (see Figure 1).

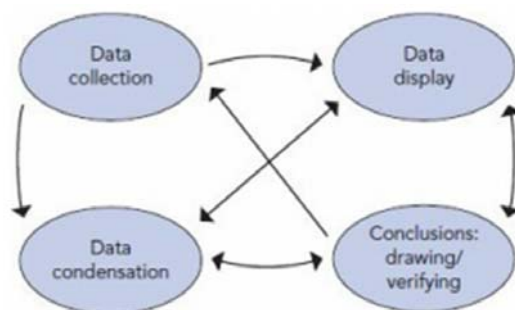


Figure 1 - Components of Data Analysis: Interactive Model (Miles et al., 2014)

In the first step, researchers conduct data condensation by selecting and simplifying the data of teachers' teaching records during a pandemic in a descriptive manner with the aim of giving a great boost to the data collected.

The first is data condensation. In this step, the process of selecting, simplifying, and focusing data teaching of English during a pandemic is descriptively so that the data is stronger. The data was gathered from observations, documents, and interviews with the headmaster, the English coordinator, and four English teachers. The second is data display. In this step, the researcher arranged the data from observations, field notes, documents, and interviews. Then they categorized it according to the problem of the study. Following that, four teachers independently verified the data collected through observation, field notes, interview, and archiver documents.

3. Results

3.1. Learning English at SD Muslim Cendekia

The purpose of the EFL learning processes at SD Muslim Cendekia is that young students in English learning can understand the basics and can practice them in daily life and have the confidence to become citizens of the world. An early concept of English learning at SD Muslim Cendekia while interviewing with the headmaster was learning by making English practice directly through spoken communication. The statement from principal' interview:

English study is not translating English to Indonesian or Indonesian to English, but the teacher gives instructions in English. In that case, some had already walked with the English instruction of the high class. They had already walked the English instructions. But because of the pandemic, several classes are struggling, both teachers and students. Judging from the results of yesterday's supervision in some of the classes, students are still asking for translations of the instructions the teacher gave. In fact, in the practice of instruction in English, the student should take note of the teacher's gestures, such as "open your book." If the student pays attention and concentrates, then the student can understand without the need to ask for a translation of the teacher's instructions or that the teacher's nonverbal gesture. (School principal – interview)

Researchers believe that English learning in the new normal era is an opportunity for teachers to teach to the fullest. Teachers were able to make English practice more accessible through spoken communication. Therefore, it requires strong, understandable gestures from the teacher when instructing the student in English. As stated by Afdaliah (2022), teachers' awareness of gestures in EFL classrooms is important, as using gestures by the teacher can improve students' understanding and motivation to learn. A teacher's gesture can influence the learning environment in the classroom. So that the English kids are able to practice their English. Besides the school principal, the English coordinator also has the same opinion as to the aim of the study in SD Muslim Cendekia Batu. Below is the full statement:

We want the children to be fluent in English and understand in English because elementary school is the foundation, so we must hold on to that foundation both as a starter and as a language development because in elementary school, students were in their golden age too, children are quick to develop the language. The goal of the school itself is to provide students with English exposure. The examples of giving English should make a gesture and then make sure students understand whether they understand. (English coordinator – interview)

The above statement confirms the statement of the principal, who mentioned that the teaching and learning of English in elementary school at the golden age affects language development. According to Ramadhan and Wulandari (2021), "Golden age time" refers to the stage when young learners are able to absorb and learn language at a much faster pace. The development of the children's personalities during the golden age affected their responsiveness to accept new things and immediately embed them in themselves (Rohmadi et al., 2022). As a result, the goal of learning English at a young age becomes both an introduction and a means of language development. However, the use of the golden age to provide English learning must be appropriate and strengthened.

On the other hand, the role of teachers in achieving learning goals is also necessary. Teachers must give clear instructions and gestures in English so that students can understand English through oral communication. In addition, based on the explanation of Dunn (2013), young students acquire language skills by taking a role in the activities performed, and to take a role in the activities, young students must have the desire to communicate. Thus, from the beginning, learning activities must take place using English because the desire to communicate using English appears to be the meaning

of English for young learners. Based on the statement, it was also found that the influencing factor of the COVID-19 pandemic hindered the EFL learning practice as students could not communicate directly with the teachers.

In addition to the goal of English learning, there is a program at SD Muslim Cendekia in learning English called “Fun with Language.” This program supports the development of English students to train children to be confident. During the interview with the principal, she explained:

A step from the goal of developing English with programs other than English that exist,” namely “Fun with language.” Children become confident when speaking English, despite Indonesian accents. Before the pandemic began, the 1st or 2nd graders, if they wanted to go to the toilet, bought food in the canteen. They were already running her English. It’s actually that simple, but we’re good with it, but now we have trouble applying it. The “Fun with language” program is now once a week, but the application is still ineffective. (School principal – interview)

From the headmaster’s explanation, the English coordinator also explained that “Fun with Language” is the right study for young subjects to make their progress in English mastery stronger. In the interview, she explained:

Before the pandemic, there was a “Fun with Language” program that taught daily expression and new vocabulary. If learning English in the classroom, we usually follow the course in the books. But, in the “fun with language” program, we have our target for his daily expression: borrowing something, asking for help, saying thank you, giving pressure, like that. (English coordinator – interview)

From this, it can be known that English education at SD Muslim Cendekia is not limited to classroom study, but there is a “Fun with Language ” program that teaches daily expression and new vocabulary. Sitompul (2020) argues that learning vocabulary is important for young learners because of their traits, such as their capacity to memorize, absorb the meaning when speaking with others, and learn through their daily activities. The difference between a “fun with language” program and one with English lessons is usually in the material. English learning follows the curriculum, whereas schools in the “Fun With Language” program have a target set by the school.

The researcher also sees that fun with language is an appropriate program with the characteristics of young learners who quickly and easily imitate a word based on the context of activities. The young student, hearing a phrase over and over again, will record and adapt to the pattern of activities once carried out. This is in line with Hashemi and Azizinezhad (2011), who state that, in general, young adults learn simple expressions, phrases, and abstract rules that they have never heard of before. It is also supported by the opinion of Peck et al. (1993) that students are not taught structure or words but are taught phrases. They are only interested in when and for what the phrase is used. Children have another way to communicate using a different phrase when engaging in English activities. However, the language program was temporarily interrupted due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The factors affecting the administration of the fun with language program are less time for learning than they were before the pandemic.

3.2. English teaching and learning preparation

In preparing learning tools, learning strategies, and implementation of learning to assessment and assessment, SD Muslim Cendekia has an English teacher coordinator who controls and ensures the learning in each English class goes well. When English teachers have difficulty or problems in the classroom, English teachers and English language coordinators discuss it together to share experiences and look for solutions. In addition, English teachers are also trained outside schools to learn English learning systems. Here is a study of preparation for English learning regarding the syllabus, lesson plan, learning materials, and media learning.

Lesson Plan and Syllabus

In an interview with four English teachers, syllabi making and lesson planning in English school studies were adapted to the Mentari English chest as a reference to establishing basic subjects, learning topics, and competence. The syllabus and lesson plan for learning English at SD Muslim Cendekia in grades one, two, three, and four were oriented on the student's book and workbook from the English chest. The English language itself is not the main lesson, but the local content in elementary school. So there are no rules for teaching English from the government. According to Musiman et al. (2020), the curriculum is one of the problems about teaching English at elementary school in Indonesia. So far, the government of Indonesia has not really supported the teaching of English to young learners. The reason for the book's selection in an interview with the English coordinator is that it covers the four skills required by the English students: listening, reading, writing, and speaking. The Mentari English Chest Book has been rated as a fundamental English teaching tool that is relevant and imperative to students at SD Muslim Cendekia. The Mentari English chest book also contains pictures and colors so that children are interested in the learning process.

Each English teacher in the class consists of one to four teachers, and each of them develops a lesson plan as a requirement for teaching. The format of a lesson plan has been provided by an English coordinator so that the English teacher can fill out a lesson plan according to the theme and materials to be taught. As for the lesson plan to be written by teachers, it also includes: 1) what its learning activity is; 2) what its learning ability is; 3) what focus of skills are; 4) its learning strategies; and then 5) its learning evaluations at each meeting. Meanwhile, the assessment column on the lesson plan includes what new ideas it has, which things should be injected into which, and then notes are found in any class. So it is expected that learning can give students a good understanding of the subject. In addition to syllabi and lesson plans, English teachers are also required to create annual semesters and programs for the grade that they are responsible for.

Research results on syllabi and lessons shows that syllabus management and lesson planning are configured well. Nesari and Heidari (2014) have said that the lesson plan explains in detail the learning process made up of passages, time and place, the material to be taught, and student learners. Dunn (2013) argues that the stipulated syllabus may then provide guidelines as to what to introduce and what to expect in the attainment of learning. Without a syllabus and lesson plan, there is no young student activity plan for learning English and no attainment of English learning. The syllabus and lesson plan in the SD Muslim Cendekia have covered all the details of the performance of learning to perform and their evaluations.

Learning materials

Material provided to students is one of the factors that must be considered for the success of teaching English to young learners (Wardhani et al., 2017). Learning materials at the SD Muslim Cendekia have been adapted to the syllabus, and a lesson plan has been developed according to the material in the Mentari English chest book. English teachers adapt to the already available student books and workbooks. Each student from the Muslim school also owned the student book and the workbook to facilitate the learning process. This book is filled with colorful and interesting drawings, which cause learners to avoid easily getting bored when reading and studying. The student's book and the workbook from the Mentari English chest book are also equipped with audio on CD so that students can hear and duplicate simple words and conversations individually at home. When selecting resources, teachers must examine numerous factors, including how to make the materials, how to select relevant materials, and how to modify the materials for our students (Diyanti, 2014). It has been explained before that at the Muslim Cendekia elementary school, there are three classes grouped according to students' level: low, medium, and high abilities. Thus, the teachers give material according to the student's learning ability in each class.

Learning media

Every English teacher at SD Muslim Cendekia has an obligation to bring learning media to teach in class. The learning media used adjusts to the teacher's creativity and also student needs. According to Telaumbanua (2016), the main role of the media in learning English is to stimulate students' minds and make it easier for students to grasp the material presented by teachers, thus helping them achieve the goals of the learning activity. Any physical items or equipment used to transmit messages from the sender (a teacher) to the recipient (students) and influence interaction between them throughout the classroom's learning are defined as learning media (Inharjanto et al., 2021). The facilities in each classroom at SD Muslim Cendekia supporting the implementation of learning include a whiteboard, television, and speaker.

Teachers used television to show videos, PowerPoint slides, and digital games (quizzes and word walls) to motivate students to take an interest in learning English. Then video exhibitions can train brainstorming students. The application of the PowerPoint slide also makes it easier for students to learn the new vocabulary, such as the difference between the writing of a word and its pronunciation in English. The teacher also used a whiteboard to explain the activities done and the speakers to play the listening material in audio. In addition, teachers in the first class, two, and three used the flashcard learning medium to keep students interested in learning. Besides, the teacher also applies a game so that students do not feel that English is a difficult lesson but rather an interesting, fun, and easy lesson. Games also train students to get used to trying, answering, and increasing students' confidence in answering questions. In learning English, students' motivation is needed by students and teachers to be enthusiastic about teaching and learning in the classroom (Laksmi et al., 2021; Lailiyah et al, 2021). Thus, that is significant due to English language mastery. Research from the study on media preparation at SD Muslim Cendekia has been sufficiently consistent with student needs.

3.3. The process of teaching and learning English

Based on interviews and observations already made, it is known that the process of teaching and learning at the SD Muslim Cendekia in the new normal pandemic era is divided into two sessions. The sessions are in the morning and afternoon. The performance of English learning in 1 week is 3 hours of lessons. The first meeting is 2 hours of lessons, and the second meeting is 1 hour of lessons. The first meeting is 2 hours of lessons, and the second meeting is 1 hour of lessons. During the normal new pandemic era, the one-hour study that was initially 35 minutes turned into 30 minutes. Thus, a student studies English in a normal pandemic era for one week, it's 90 minutes. In this section, researchers use data from observation and documents to understand the English teaching and learning processes for young scholars in the first/second/third grades of the SD Muslim Cendekia. The teaching and learning activities consist of a pre-activity, a main activity, and a closing activity in the meeting.

Pre-activity

Before the learning activity begins The teacher passed the classroom, then went to classroom greetings, prayed together, and checked the students' classrooms. Then, the teacher focused on the students so that they were able to pay attention to the learning activity. As for the media used by the teacher, instruct the student to listen to the music, sing, tell stories about funny stories, ice-breaking, or brain gym. After focusing on the student, the teacher asks what has been learned in the previous meeting. Additionally, teachers also present what materials are to be learned today by starting stimulating questions with students.

Main activity

Teachers present materials prepared to teach AIDS with videos, audio, flashcards, or PowerPoint slides relating to the material to be studied. Students looked enthusiastic and paid high attention as teachers began learning. Students were reviewing and analyzing the material from teaching AIDS (video, audio, flashcard, or slide PowerPoint) and the teacher's literacy about the material. The teacher explained in English, accompanied by gestures, so that the students were able to understand the teacher's explanation easily. We also found that teachers were also using bahasa in the lower class. Teachers can master the material well so that students can participate in the learning process. In addition to the study itself, the teacher also imparts character traits on students, such as integrity, self-reliance, and communication. Students would play games, listen to practice, or practice with friends after the teacher had explained the material.

The teacher would write the next activity on the whiteboard while making updates in the student book, workbook, or worksheet. After that, the students took the assignments seriously. When the student finished completing the assignment, they came to the teacher's desk to submit the assignment. Students line up in front of the classroom while waiting for the teacher's task correction queue. When there was still something wrong, the student returned to their seat and justified themselves according to the teacher's direction and explanation. The teacher does not give any homework to students.

Close activity

After the teacher had corrected the student's work, students had a question and answer section based on the study today. Later on, the teacher asked the student to unpack the books and writing materials into the bag. The teacher then asked the class president to lead the prayer, after which the students prayed together. Students then gave salutations and thanked the teacher.

3.4. Teachers' difficulties in teaching English

Learning in the new normal of the pandemic era is a challenge for teachers. Students have long followed online learning, which means the student is not learning in the classroom, so teachers have challenges in teaching activities. The following are a statement from an interviews with the four English teachers regarding the challenges each faces and the teacher's response to solving the problem:

If the problem persists, children are still in kindergarten and first grade, and they still like to run around, but not as much as in the early school days. While now it's better, students are often losing focus and attention. So it should always be appeased with the saying, "silent please". and still like to walk around sometimes. Sometimes they just look at their friends, but they like to say "miss cheating". It's not a serious problem, but it's natural. Thus, when the students are busy early, it's hard. We're trying to make sense of what class it is, but not just once or twice. We have to keep going. Sometimes weeks or months have been given an abrupt understanding that next week or next month it can be so again. To keep reminding myself, it must be loud and not boring. (Teacher 1 - interview)

The first focuses on the teacher because at the beginning of the lesson it is hard to focus on the teacher. Sometimes during class, there is also a sudden play when explaining the lesson and language function, so there is no difficulty. For the lower class, it was heavier on the handle. Thus, when the entrance is focused on small talk, video, or ice-breaking, it can attract students first. (Teacher 2 - interview)

Since the school is required to speak English every day, however, certain classes still use a half-and-half. And the children sometimes complained in certain classes because it was probably noon, and they said, "boring miss, no English miss!". Thus, we will sing or talk and joke at the beginning. Like, knowing the atmosphere in the classroom first. (Teacher 3 - interview)

The point in the upper classes is not that all can speak English excellently, but that they excel in all subjects/lessons, so there must be some who haven't mastered and grade average. And the majority of them can communicate in English. If the middle class averages English and is active in both answering and running around, it is active. Unlike the high class, they are active but conducive. If the class is low-class, they keep silent when they don't understand the lesson. Thus, teachers reach out to the children more closely. When the kid asks for games, the kid can be debriefed by appointment at the beginning. If you want games, you have to make the first meeting conducive. (Teacher 4 - interview)

From the interview with four English teachers, This study found that the biggest challenge in learning English is catching the attention of students during the learning process. Keeping the attention of students, among other things, is a problem in focusing the students at the beginning of the study. When the teacher begins the study, sometimes the students pay no attention and are not eager to learn. Especially when classes started during the day, students' concentration levels began to decline. So teachers are required to be able to make students interested in learning to perform. Anggraini (2018) explains that a limited period of young learners' attention requires a teacher to get students' attention at the beginning of the learning. In addition, getting students to keep focusing on learning is also an obstacle for teachers. During the learning process, some students are talking, playing, teasing their friends, switching places, and speaking loudly. Widodo and Dewi (2019) suggests that young learners are easily troubled in the learning process and that keeping them focused also makes teaching a challenge. This distracted the concentration of both teachers and other students.

According to Harmer (2010) explanation, young learners will easily get bored and lose interest after ten minutes if learning activities are not interesting. It is because young students have a limited attention span. The student's conditioning-related constraints may also lead to the students' less than optimal learning outcomes. So it takes skill from teachers to handle the obstacles to student conditioning. The teacher's way of handling student conditioning obstacles during the learning process is by giving understanding to students over and over again, attracting students from the beginning of the study period, and creating creative and non-boring learning activities.

4. Conclusion

This study found that English learning in SD Muslim Cendekia made much more oral communication as the learning-teaching process continued. It is supported by a "Fun with Language" program that adds new vocabulary, expressions, and student knowledge of the English language. Further, it is also found that the process of learning English at SD Muslim Cendekia can run well despite the effects of online learning. Next, the syllabus and lesson plans are designed and implemented according to the needs and abilities of the students. Thus, the teaching and learning process can be carried out according to plan. This is also supported by teachers who have mastered the material and established the right medium of learning. However, there were some obstacles teachers encountered during this new normal pandemic era. It is sometimes a little bit difficult to catch the attention of students during the learning process. Even so, during the process teachers are able to clearly explain the difficulties faced so that students can take part in the teaching and learning process. This demonstrates that educators may foster positive relationships with students.

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